

FORUM INTERNATIONAL : TOURISME SOLIDAIRE ET DÉVELOPPEMENT DURABLE

FICHE DE PRÉSENTATION DE PROJET

TITRE : **BOURGAS REGION - FIRE DANCE, BIRDS, NATURE AND SEA**

PAYS : **BULGARIE**

1. Background

Bourgas region is the most south-eastern part of Bulgaria. It is located on the Black sea coast and includes mountains, valleys, seaside coastal areas. This is the area where Strandzha Mountain reaches the sea. There are natural parks, plenty of history and culture, delicious cuisine and wine.

The coastal area is one of the most impressive bird sights in Europe. Every year hundreds of thousands of birds from over three hundred species migrate via Bourgas region. This is a part of the major migration route of birds VIA PONTICA. There are two special visitors' centers for bird watching.

The rich diversity of flora and fauna in the area was the reason for the announcement of the first protected territory in Bulgaria in SILKOSIA RESERVE. Since 1995 the whole Strandzha Mountain has been announced as a Natural Park. It is a unique combination of local culture, nature and historical monuments from Thracian times.

In the north part of the region the Balkan Mountains serves as a natural border between North and South Bulgaria. Another Natural Park called "The BLUE ROCKS" protects the biodiversity and promotes the area as a tourist sight.

The rivers that flow east to the Black Sea is covered with lianas and climbing plant. They resemble a real jungle and may be seen either on walking tours or boat tours.

The whole coastal area is famous for its small and picturesque bays with sandy beaches. The cliffs and rocky capes among them attract divers and fans of aquatic archaeology and rock climbing.

The southern part of the region where STRANDZHA NATURAL PARK is located is famous for fire dancing tradition. It is still a mystery how people not only step but dance bare-footed on burning amber. The secret is handed over from one generation to another. Old legends are revived over the amber every year in the beginning of June.

History is alive in the ancient towns of Sozopol and Nessebar with their churches, fortresses, ports and preserved atmosphere of the ancient Greek ports from more than 2 000 years ago. The combination of ancient monuments and Bulgarian Renaissance

architecture turns these towns into genuine picture dictionaries of human civilization and also into wonderful themes for painters, musicians and artists. The old town of Nessebar is in the list of World Natural and Cultural Heritage of UNESCO since 1983.

The area is known abroad only as a seaside tourism destination. At the same time it possesses diverse countryside which can be combined with the sea tours or offered as new tourism products.

The transition of the country from centrally planned to open market economy since 1989 created more difficulties for the development. Many of the factories have been closed, unemployment rate increased rapidly, transfer of ownership of state-owned factories and hotels has started.

Staff working in the tourism industry needs permanent training and improvement of skills. The service has to be improved. New tourism products have to be developed in the area and promoted abroad.

The problems linked with the inclusion of Bourgas region in the creation of attractive complex regional tourist product are the following: bad condition of archaeological sites, low level of offered tourist services and limited number of additional tourist services, insufficient public infrastructure (road access, access for disabled, signs, marked routes, signed sightseeings). There is no recording of visitors and no forecast can be done. People involved in local administrations are not enough familiar with the development of tourism. There is a lack of efficient marketing of Bourgas region as a tourist destination.

The image of Bourgas region as a tourist destination is only of a recreational area. It is not considered as a cultural and heritage resort, Natural Park area. The only income is from lodgings and food provided in the area. The share of tourist attractions and entertainment is about 10% of income. There is limited access to cultural monuments and natural sights of national importance.

2. The Tourism Project

The overall aim of the project is to develop sustainable tourist product within the whole Bourgas region by improvement the use of the natural and cultural heritage of the area. At the moment Bourgas region is promoted only as a recreational tourism destination. The project involves promotion of the region as an important tourist site in Bulgaria. Tourism Plan, promotional materials, international conferences and photograph exhibitions in combination with training of local people and discussions all over the region will assist the formation and promotion of the diverse tourism product. Its development will assist the economic regeneration of the area and help to improve perception of the Southeast region of Bulgaria as a tourist and cultural destination. This new major tourism product will have the triple benefits of strengthening the region image, attracting more visitors and spending power from outside the region and creating jobs.

The project supports increased prosperity and a better quality of life, sustainable development and social welfare.

The **overall aim** of the project is to:

- Develop sustainable tourist product within the Bourgas region by improvement the use of the region natural and cultural heritage
- Contribute to the economic and social benefits of local residents

The **specific aims** of the Project are:

- Create integrated tourist product in Bourgas region – seaside recreation tourism and alternative tourism
- Increase expenditure of tourists visiting the area
- Increase employment in the area
- Train local people in new skills

3. Local Organisation

The local implementer is BOURGAS REGIONAL TOURISM ASSOCIATION. BRTA was registered in court on 21.12.1998 г. The overall aim of the Association is to support and encourage the development of fair tourism in the whole Bourgas region, as well as to work in partnership with other institutions to promote the area as a tourist destination.

BRTA is a member of the National Tourism Board of Republic of Bulgaria since 1999.

The members of BRTA are 9 local Tourism Councils, 5 regional branch tourism organizations and 2 protected areas.

The main activities of BRTA are:

- Organisation of annual National Tourism Fair in the Region “YOUR HOLIDAYS” in April - May since 2001;
- Organisation of annual Regional Tourism Forum in the region in November – December since 1999;
- Participation at national and international tourism fairs – since 1999;
- Organisation of travel writers and journalist trips;
- Presentations in regional, national and international media;
- Participation in projects funded by international donors – British KHF, PHARE Programme of European Union;
- Participation in training courses and seminars;
- Participation in the development of Strategy for development of South East planning region;

PROJECT managed by BRTA:

- “Preservation of biodiversity and sustainable development of STRANDZHA NATURAL PARC and BOURGAS WETLANDS” – funded by Bulgarian-Swiss biodiversity programme;

- “Preparation of a directory with possibilities for funding for sustainable development” – funded by Monaco and Ministry of environment of Republic of Bulgaria;
- “Ecotourism – training programme” - funded by Monaco and Ministry of environment of Republic of Bulgaria;

4. Partnership(s)

BRTA works in partnership with Bourgas District Administration and all its members to develop the project.

5. Results

As a result of the implementation of the project **a new tourist product** will be developed and promoted in the area. It will diversify the tourist offer of the Black Sea coast.

The impact of the project will go wider than Bourgas region. The development has the potential to significantly alter the perceptions of the area as a seaside destination and make it world famous as the main tourist site in Bulgaria. The perceptions for Bourgas District will be altered through the association of major cultural and natural tourist attractions. It will help the creation of sustainable tourist products and improvement in their quality by offering better services. The project will add value to the existing attractions within the Southeast-planning region of Bulgaria and encourage more visitors to the region. By increase of number of visitors all services offered to the area will benefit, and thus new jobs will be created.

The target audience of the project is the local community, which will have direct benefit. Indirect impact will be made on potential visitors and investors in the region. The cultural heritage of the area will be preserved for future generations.

The introduction of alternative tourism within the area will assist to diversify the local economy and create jobs. The impact of the project will be felt not only within Bourgas region, but also across the whole planning region. The potential to stimulate tourist related business start-ups and to outsource services. This includes bicycle hire, town wide tours, private museums and refreshment. Effective partnerships between the private sector and public bodies and stakeholders at local regional national and international level will maximize tourism’s positive contribution and minimize its negative impact on environment.

The project will also bring an important training opportunity to the area. BRTA is linked to tourism training providers who will be involved in creation an opportunity for students each year to participate in a training programme associated with the conservation and preservation of cultural and natural sites. Training will form part of the visitor’s experience.

The project will also provide an important educational resource for secondary schools in Bourgas region.

The development will create a significant change to the future of the region, stimulating economic growth in the area through the generation of the visitor expenditure within the whole Bourgas region. This project will make a significant contribution to the economic regeneration of Bourgas region and build upon the work already carried out there by BRTA and Bourgas District administration.

People involved in the project will increase their commitment for preservation of cultural and natural sites. A sense of pride for belonging to the territory will be raised.

Cooperation between NGO sector and local authorities will be strengthened. The region will become a more attractive and accessible to tourists. That will increase the living standard of local population.

All local actors will support the project, which guarantees its success. The partnership approach and involvement of different stakeholders will influence the policy at local and regional level. The project will have social effect. The creation of facilities for disabled is a new approach in the tourist sector in the region. The discussions and international conference will put together different institutions and the results will be sent to the respective governmental institutions in order to improve their policy. The result of the project will belong to the local community.

The development of a marketing plan for promotion of cultural tourism product is a new approach for advertising the area.

6. Difficulties

The main obstacles and difficulties for implementation of the project activities are lack of international partners and lack of donor to contribute to the project implementation. An international training tourist institution will contribute to the education of local people and community. In partnership with BRTA an international organization may transfer its knowledge, skills and best practice in the above mentioned issues.

7. Prospects

The project can evolve by finding appropriate interested partners to BRTA.

8. Proposals

The priority actions should be establishment of strong network among organizations concerned by fair tourism in order to help resolve difficulties and improve development prospects for this type of tourism in the country and abroad.

An action plan should be developed and implemented in each area.

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